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Author(s): Ann Gunter

Source: *Iran*, Vol. 20 (1982), pp. 103-112

Published by: [British Institute of Persian Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4299724>

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REPRESENTATIONS OF URARTIAN AND WESTERN IRANIAN FORTRESS ARCHITECTURE IN THE ASSYRIAN RELIEFS

By Ann Gunter

The relief sculptures from the palaces of the Neo-Assyrian kings are significant documents for the military campaigns, extensive pictorial records of which are preserved from the time of Ashurnasirpal II (833–859 B.C.) onwards. They contain a multitude of detailed representations, ranging from monumental sculpture to individual features of dress and ornament which, if carefully analysed, are valuable sources for the material culture of the Assyrians and their contemporaries. One of the most common themes of the reliefs, which varied little in subject matter from Ashurnasirpal II to Ashurbanipal (668–627 B.C.), is the conquest of an enemy city or fortification.

The purpose of this discussion is to assemble and analyse the representations of fortress architecture identified via accompanying inscriptions as Urartian or Western Iranian locations. They will be briefly discussed in terms of artistic conventions, then analysed as a group. The goal of this study is to determine whether the representations are individualized by geographical region and also to assess their value as sources for the original appearance of fortress and other architecture which has rarely been sufficiently preserved to allow for detailed reconstructions.¹

Representations of architecture have not previously been examined as a group. Earlier discussions of the reliefs have often been concerned with analysing individual features depicted in the campaign scenes, thereby attempting to trace their chronological development throughout the Neo-Assyrian period.² Although such analyses of dress, ornament and weaponry have served also to demonstrate their documentary value, the representations of architecture are not universally agreed to furnish reliable sources for this category of archaeological evidence. Isolated representations of secular or religious buildings located in Assyria and elsewhere have been shown to correspond closely to textual descriptions or to archaeological remains.³ A less favourable documentary status, however, has traditionally been accorded the pictorial records of enemy fortresses under Assyrian attack. This view was expressed by R. Naumann in a discussion of some of the Urartian and Syrian fortresses depicted on the Balawat Gates of Shalmaneser III. Naumann observed that the representations differed in details of topographical setting and in the number and arrangement of towers and gates, but concluded that they served essentially as “hieroglyphs” for fortified cities. Such variations in detail as did occur he attributed principally to “the world of the artist”.⁴

A more systematic examination of the representations of Urartian and Western Iranian fortresses should reveal whether Assyrian sculptors attempted to portray, within the limitations imposed by established artistic conventions, the characteristic topography and architecture of these and other regions in which the campaigns took place.

The Sources

The reliefs, together with certain of the written records, served a social and political function that affects their usefulness as documentary sources. The subject matter of the pictorial accounts of the campaigns was surely chosen primarily as effective official propaganda: there are records only of Assyrian victories, none of defeats. Undoubtedly the sculptures were also meant to be seen by foreign visitors as *Machtkunst*, to impress them with Assyrian military strength and royal grandeur. A further purpose of the reliefs was to illustrate the king in victorious battle, in the service of the god Ashur.

But the function of both pictorial and written propaganda might also be expected to involve an attempt at a realistic or semi-realistic portrayal of the campaigns, the main occupation of each Assyrian king from Ashurnasirpal to Ashurbanipal. The character of the sculptures as *Machtkunst* might in fact contribute to the careful documentation of the select and glorious moments preserved on the

palace reliefs, since some of the viewers would be precisely those peoples once conquered who were supposed not to forget the destructive might of Ashur.

The textual sources suggest that many factual details of the Assyrian campaigns may reasonably be sought in the corresponding pictorial accounts. Since scribes and sculptors accompanied the army on the campaigns, it seems likely that campaign routes, descriptions of enemy territory and settlements, and lists of booty, were recorded with considerable accuracy.⁵ The annals record the names of hundreds of cities and towns captured or dominated by the Assyrians, and often rank foreign settlements in the order of their importance: there are “royal cities” belonging to the ruler of a particular kingdom, “strong cities”, “small cities” and “fortresses”. Furthermore, the written sources occasionally furnish details of the topography and appearance of the settlements under attack. In the Letter to Ashur recounting his eighth campaign, Sargon provides a description of his route through Urartu and of some of the cities he encountered.

From the strong cities of the land of Sangibute I departed, to the district of Armarilî I drew near. Bubuzi, the fortress, Hundur, which is surrounded by two walls, in front of (each) tower, *tubalu*’s were constructed in the moat (?),—Ale, Sinishapalâ, Siniunak, Arna, Sharnî, 7 strong cities, together with 30 cities of their neighbourhood, which lie at the foot of Mount Ubianda, I destroyed totally, and levelled to the ground. The beams of their roofs I set on fire and made like flames.⁷

Thus while the function of both written and pictorial accounts limited their subject matter, it might also have led to an attempt to portray realistically the fortified cities of foreign lands, the conquests of which were such prestigious accomplishments.

Studies of the arrangement of the reliefs in the Assyrian palaces suggest that the sequences of campaign scenes often followed an actual geographical or chronological order. Such attention to historical fact seems evident in the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad, where the battles of a single campaign or series of related campaigns were apparently depicted within a particular room.⁸ Among the reliefs dated to other reigns, such as those of Ashurbanipal, the geographical proximity of the events portrayed determined the arrangement of scenes in narrative sequence.⁹ The documentary value of many details of the representations has now been established by analyses of weaponry, dress and ornament from military and ritual scenes; enemy soldiers and foreign captives were regularly shown in characteristic battle attire and national costume.¹⁰ An attempt to portray the distinctive architecture and topography of foreign lands would be consistent with the rendering of costume and armament.

Representations of Urartian and Western Iranian Fortresses

Representations identified via accompanying cuneiform inscriptions as locations in Urartu or Western Iran are listed below. The entries briefly identify the source and publication of each relief or drawing, grouping them broadly as Urartian, Median and Elamite.¹¹

Urartu

The principal source for representations of Urartian fortresses are the decorated metal bands that covered the Balawat Gates of Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.). Although studies of the reconstructed sequence show that the events depicted did not follow the historical order of Shalmaneser’s campaigns, the two registers of each band seem to have represented events from a single campaign. In addition to the Gate Inscription engraved on the edge of the door-fittings, each band was labelled independently—each register if different campaigns were depicted—with the date and the location represented.¹²

Bands I, II and the upper register of Band VII depict Shalmaneser’s campaigns in Urartu. An inscription in the lower register of Band VII refers to the land of Gilzanu, which has been located in this vicinity, to the west of Lake Urmia.¹³

1. (Pl. Ia) Band I, lower register. Sugunia, the city of Arame the Urartian. (King, pl. III).
2. (Pl. Ib) Band II, upper register. (King, pl. VIII).
3. (Pl. Ic) Band II, lower register. (King, pl. IX). The inscription in the upper register of this band describes an attack in the “land of Urartu”.

4. (Pl. Ie) Band VII, lower register. The accompanying inscription describes the subjection of the “men of Gilzanu”. (King, pl. XXXVII).
5. (Pl. Id) Band VII, upper register. Arsashku(n), the city of Arame the Urartian. (King, pl. XXXIX).

Media

Although Assyrian campaigns in this region of the Central and Northern Zagros are known to have taken place as early as the reign of Shalmaneser III, representations identified by inscriptions are limited to the reliefs of Tiglath-pileser III (746-727 B.C.) and Sargon II (721-705 B.C.). The sculptures of Tiglath-pileser from the Central Palace at Nimrud were recovered in fragmentary condition, so that their original arrangement is uncertain. They were divided into two registers separated by a cuneiform band relating the events depicted; individual scenes were occasionally labelled separately.¹⁴

6. (P. IIa) B.M. 115634 and 118903. Nimrud, Central Palace, slab 16, upper register. The inscription preserved on this slab deals with the tribute Tiglath-pileser received from the kings of the west and his campaign against Media in his ninth year. All that remains of the place name, however, reads: “the city Ú . . .”. R. D. Barnett would like to place the scene north or northwest of Assyria, suggesting that the fragment may be restored as “Ú-paš”, thus the city of the Median ruler of Bit-Kapsu on the Urartian border, whom Tiglath-pileser encountered during his ninth campaign.¹⁵ (Barnett and Falkner, pls. XXXVIII, XL).

Sargon’s campaigns in Media during 716 and 715 B.C. were recorded primarily in Rooms II and XIV of his palace at Khorsabad. As documented by E. Flandin’s drawings of the original reliefs, both rooms contained two registers depicting captioned battles in this or adjacent regions of Western and Northwestern Iran. The lower register of Room II, and an upper register scene in the northeast entrance to the room, recorded attacks on Median cities and the fortress of Harhar. The upper register of Room XIV included two scenes of assaults on fortifications, of which one is the Median city of Kisheslu. The name of the second city has been restored as “P[a] -za-sh [i]” and identified with Panzish, known from Sargon’s campaign of 715 B.C., located northwest of Media in the vicinity of the Mannean kingdom.¹⁶

7. (Pl. IIIa) Room II, Door H; upper register. Bit Bagaya. (Botta and Flandin I, pl. 77).
8. (Pl. IIb) Room II, upper register. Shurgadia (?). (Botta and Flandin I, pl. 70).
9. (Pl. IIb) Room II, lower register. Ganghutu. (Botta and Flandin I, pl. 70).
10. (Pl. IIIb) Room II, lower register. Kisheshim. (Botta and Flandin I, pls. 68-68 bis).
11. (Pl. IIId) Room II, lower register. Tikrakka. (Botta and Flandin I, pl. 64).
12. (Pl. IIIC) Room II, lower register. Kindau. (Botta and Flandin I, pl. 61).
13. (Pl. IVc) Room II, lower register. Harhar. (Botta and Flandin I, pl. 55).
14. (Pl. IVb) Room XIV, lower register. Pazashi/Panzish (?). (Botta and Flandin II, pl. 145)
15. (Pl. IVa) Room XIV, lower register. Kisheslu. (Botta and Flandin II, pl. 147).

Elam

Ashurbanipal’s campaigns in this area of southwestern Iran were depicted among the reliefs carved for him in what had been Sennacherib’s South-West palace at Nineveh as well as those of Ashurbanipal’s own new residence, the North Palace. Events from the fifth campaign were illustrated in different versions, in Room XXXIII of the South-West palace and in Room I of the North Palace.¹⁷ Room F of the North Palace, the “Susiana Room”, depicted the subsequent capture of Hamanu. The “Upper Chambers” above Rooms S, T and V of the North Palace portrayed attacks on Hamanu and other Elamite cities, which took place during the seventh and eighth campaigns.¹⁸ Captions carved on the slabs identified the locations.

16. Pl. Vb) B.M. 124931. North Palace, Room F, upper register. Hamanu. (Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pl. XVII).
17. (Pl. Va) B.M. 124919. North Palace, Room S’ (“fallen into Room S”), central register. Hamanu. (Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pl. LXVI).

18. (Not illustrated) Louvre A0 19905. North Palace, Room S' ("fallen into Room S"), central register. Capture of an Elamite city, whose name is not preserved. (Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pls. LX-LXI).

19. (Pl. VIa) B.M. 124802. South-West Palace, Room XXXIII, central register. Madaktu. (Paton, pls. 65–66).

Narrative and Spatial Conventions in the Assyrian Reliefs

A study of the architectural features depicted on the reliefs depends in large part on an analysis of the conventions used in the representations. Methods of indicating spatial relationships will determine any detailed interpretation of the evidence portrayed; in E. H. Gombrich's words, "unless we know the conventions, we have no means of guessing which aspect is presented to us".¹⁹ The narrative composition of the reliefs from each reign has recently been discussed by J. E. Reade.²⁰ The following review focuses on the rendering of spatial relationships of architecture and topographical setting, and the place of the city siege theme in the narrative structure.

The basic narrative and spatial convention in the Assyrian representations is the parallel register scheme. Already in use in the White Obelisk, this became the principal device for the arrangement of figures and objects in space, the base of the register serving as a ground line. This formula extended as well to the placement of secondary figures in the field above the main scene, as if on imaginary ground lines (Pls. IIa, Va, VIb).²¹ The horizontal division of the main field also allowed the artist to represent two or more spatially and temporally related events in a limited area. The convention of narrow parallel registers for this purpose is most fully developed in the reliefs of Ashurbanipal, enabling the artist to depict large groups of people and animals in motion (Pl. VIa).²²

In the campaign scenes illustrated in Shalmaneser's Balawat Gates, landscape elements such as scale-patterned mounds indicating rocky ground or mountainous terrain, or wavy lines ending in spirals representing water, are usually placed on the register ground line (Pls. I, VIc, VIIa, b, c & VIIb). This adherence to the base line was probably due to the small size of each register, some 12 cm. in height. Even here, however, attempts to indicate the space behind or around the figures are made by placing natural features in the field above them. In two scenes, a river is shown diagonally above the advancing figures, representing the water on the other side of the bridge.²³ A like treatment of space in the portrayal of landscape is the use of both registers of a band to depict a single event in its topographical setting. In the scene of Shalmaneser's visit to the source of the Tigris, both registers are employed to include the cave or valley at the top and the river running through a mountain at the bottom.²⁴ In another scene, a city under attack is depicted in both registers of the band (Pl. VIIIb). Even in the limited field of the bronze bands, the register scheme allowed for variations in the placement of architecture and landscape features.

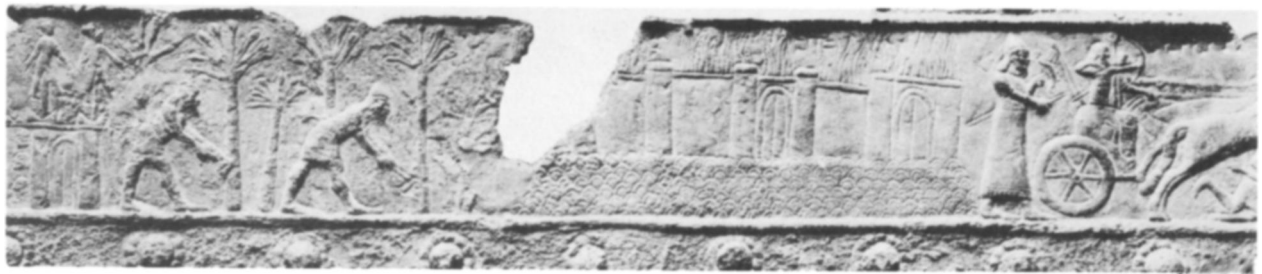
More frequent experimentation with the vertical disposition of features and figures in the register field occurs among reliefs dating from the seventh century. In Sennacherib's campaign in the marshes, the swampy background covers the entire field.²⁵ The siege of Lachish, dating to the same reign, likewise employs a conventionalized natural feature—here, the scale pattern—to cover the field (Pl. VIb). These variations continued in Ashurbanipal's sculptures. In the illustrations of the Elamite campaigns, for example, the horizontal division of the slab still occurs, but features comprising part of the scene, such as rivers, are now often used for this purpose (Pl. VIa).²⁶

Another device for representing depth in the two-dimensional reliefs is the rendering of figures one in front of another, or of figures in front of landscape features or buildings. In its most abbreviated version this takes the form of overlapping one figure with part of another, and is commonly used in the Balawat Gates scenes to show pairs or groups of animals or soldiers (Pls. I, VIc, VIIa, c, d & VIIIa). Spatial relationships between figures and their surroundings are sometimes more explicitly rendered when figures appear in front of landscape features or buildings, as in the Balawat Gates (Pls. Ia, c, and VIIe) and in reliefs of Tiglath-pileser III (Pl. IIa). Sargon's sculptors experimented further with the placing of landscape features both in front of and behind figures or buildings (Pls. IIb, III, IV). In Pl. IIIa, a mountain rises behind the fortress set on a scale-patterned mound. Ashurbanipal's reliefs also depict soldiers in front of fortresses and mounds (Pl. V).

The figures and buildings placed in the register field are rendered according to standard



Pl. 1a. Uartian Fortress of Sugunia. Balawat Gates, Band I, Lower Register.



Pl. 1b. Uartian Fortress. Balawat Gates, Band II, Upper Register.



Pl. 1c. Uartian Fortress. Balawat Gates, Band II, Lower Register.



Pl. 1d. Uartian Fortress of Arsashku(n). Balawat Gates, Band VII, Upper Register.



Pl. 1e. Fortress in Gilzanu. Balawat Gates, Band VII, Lower Register.



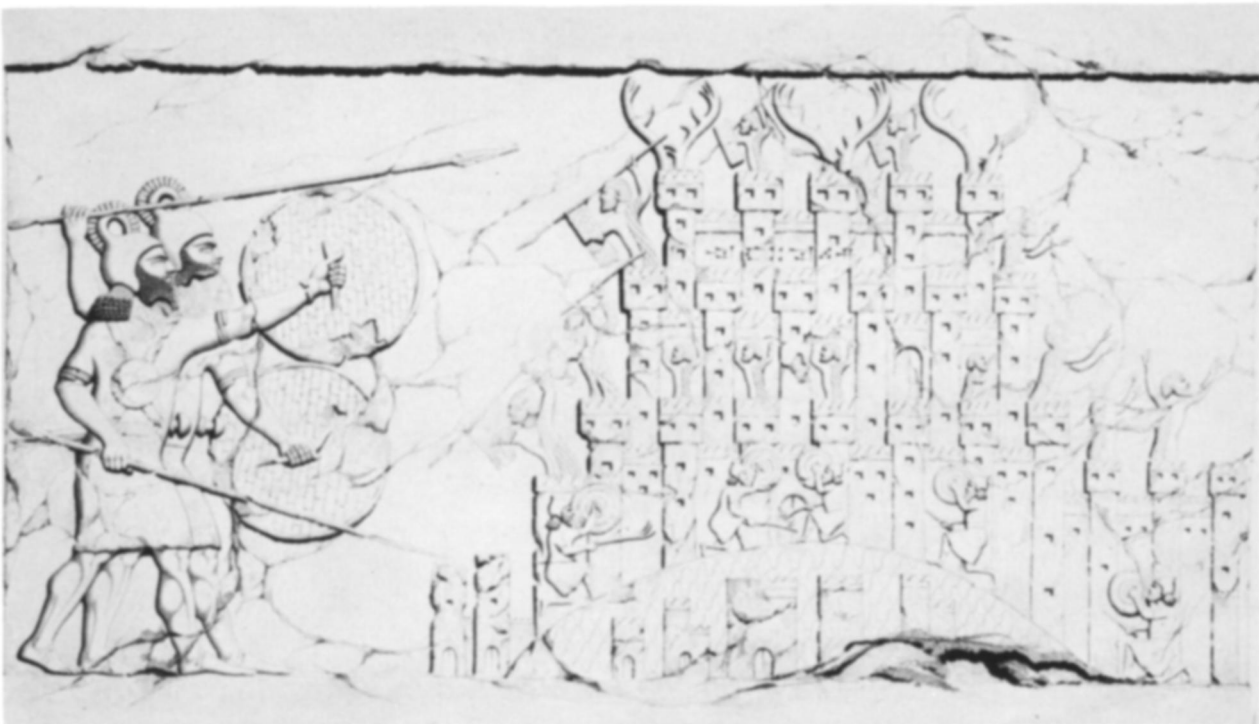
Pl. IIa. Median (?) Fortress. B. M. 115634 + 118903. Nimrud, Palace of Tiglath-pileser III (Central Palace).



Pl. IIb. Median Fortresses of Shurgadia (?) and Ganguhthu. Khorsabad, Palace of Sargon II, Room II.



Pl. IIIa. Median Fortress of Bit Bagaya. Khorsabad, Palace of Sargon II, Room II.



Pl. IIIb. Median Fortress of Kisheshim. Khorsabad, Palace of Sargon II, Room II.



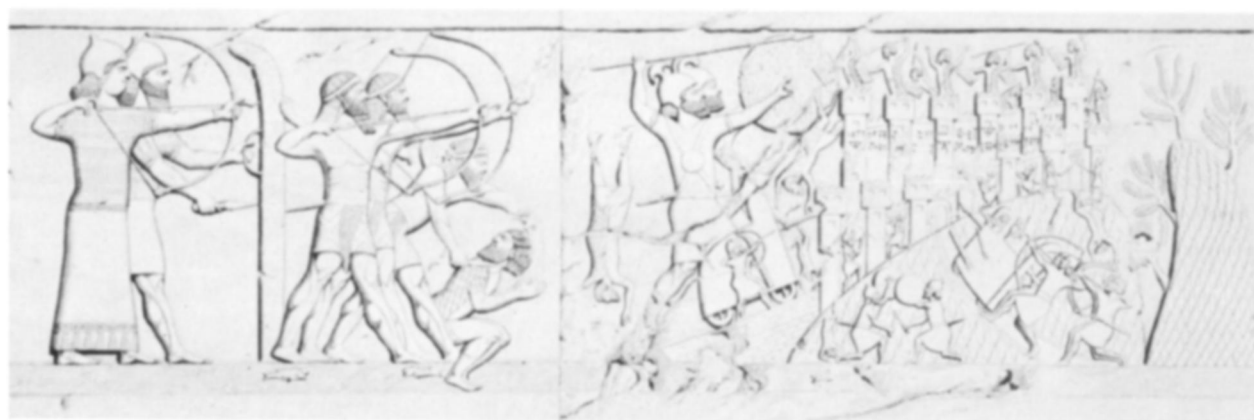
Pl. IIIc. Median Fortress of Kindau. Khorsabad, Palace of Sargon II, Room II.



Pl. IIId. Median Fortress of Tikrakka. Khorsabad, Palace of Sargon II, Room II.



Pl. IVa. Median Fortress of Kisheslu. Khorsabad, Palace of Sargon II, Room II.



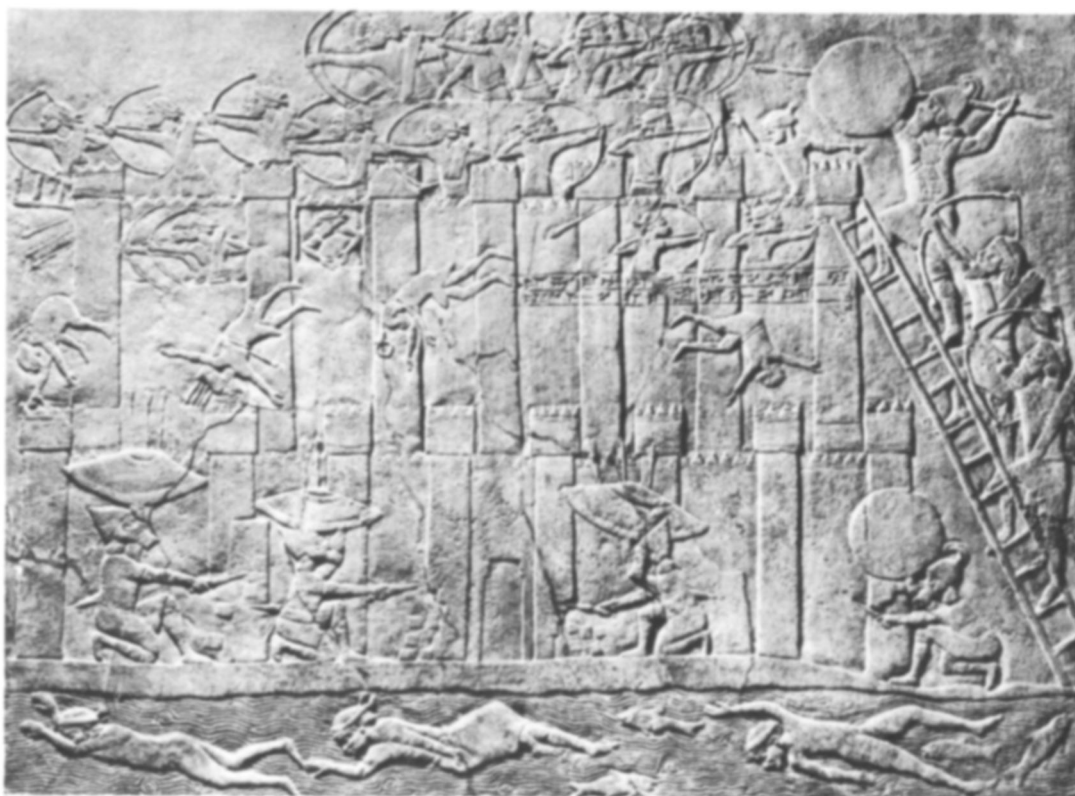
Pl. IVb. Mannean Fortress of Pazashi/Panzish. Khorsabad, Palace of Sargon II, Room XIV.



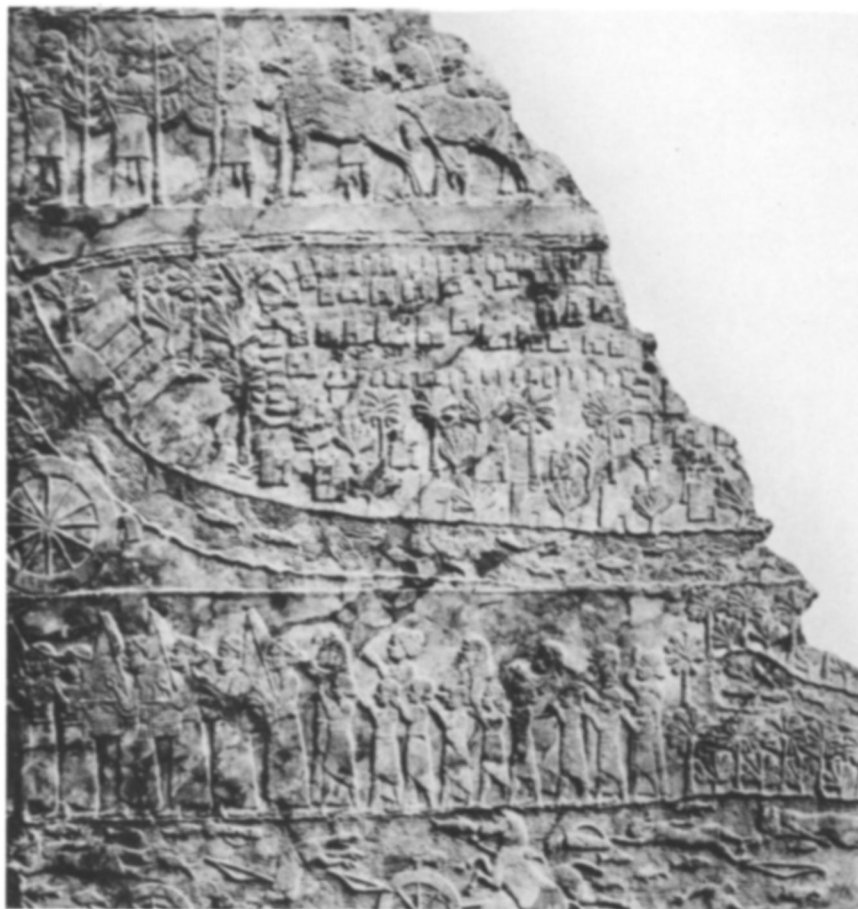
Pl. IVc. Fortress of Harhar. Khorsabad, Palace of Sargon II, Room II.



Pl. Va. Elamite Fortress of Hamanu. B.M. 124919. Nineveh, North Palace, above Room S.



Pl. Vb. Elamite Fortress of Hamanu. B.M. 124931. Nineveh, North Palace, Room F.



Pl. VIa. Elamite Fortress of Madaktu. B.M. 124802. Nineveh, South-West Palace, Room XXXIII.



Pl. VIb. Palestinian Fortress of Lachish. B.M. 124906. Nineveh, South-West Palace.



Pl. VIc. Phoenician Fortress of Tyre. Balawat Gates, Band III, Upper Register.



Pl. VIIa. Phoenician Fortress of Khazazu. Balawat Gates, Band III, Lower Register.



Pl. VIIb. North Syrian Fortress. Balawat Gates, Band V, Lower Register.



Pl. VIIc. North Syrian Fortress. Balawat Gates, Band V, Upper Register.



Pl. VIId. North Syrian Fortress. Balawat Gates, Band IV, Lower Register.



Pl. VIIe. North Syrian Fortress. Balawat Gates, Band IV.



Pl. VIIIa. Northeast Mesopotamian Fortress. Balawat Gates, Band VIII.



Pl. VIIIb. Northeast Mesopotamian Fortress. Balawat Gates, Band VIII.

formulae. Humans and animals are regularly shown in profile, although attempts at a three-quarter view also occur.²⁷ Architecture is nearly always represented in strict frontal elevation, at least before the seventh century. The one exception is the military camp, which is always depicted in a kind of plan. The circular, oval or rectangular plan of the camp is shown, with towers and crenellations which would have been placed on top of its walls depicted in elevation, arranged around its sides. Occasionally the camps are divided into halves or quarters to provide ground lines for the figures and structures inside, and sometimes contain a baldachin or canopy-like structure, always rendered in frontal elevation.²⁸ In Ashurbanipal's reliefs, cities are sometimes depicted in a kind of plan, such as the Elamite city in Pl. VIa.²⁹ As in the representations of camps, structures inside the city such as walls and towers are shown in frontal elevation. Representations of architecture, whether in plan or elevation, are usually projected flatly against the background of the relief, with no attempt to render space in an illusionistic manner. Depth is indicated by superposition, so that a second tier of walls and towers is shown above the main defence on the ground line. This convention, like the placement of figures in rows in the upper part of the register field, suggests location behind, or above and behind, what is depicted in the lower part of the field.

The rendering of architecture in frontal elevation usually extends also to the individual features—towers, doors and crenellations—of the buildings and fortifications. A seeming exception is the triangular shape of the crenellations often shown surmounting walls and towers. Here the triangular shape is not a different view, but a simplification of the stepped battlements which are occasionally depicted in frontal elevation (Pl. Vb).³⁰

The use of frontal elevation in the architectural representations might in part be connected with the narrative structure of the reliefs. The movement in each register was carried horizontally from slab to slab across the length of the room. Occasionally the progression would be temporarily halted at a city shown attacked from both sides, the frontality of the fortifications thereby focusing attention on the siege—the climactic moment of the campaign—towards which the profile figures direct the spectator's view.

The formula for portraying an attack on a fortified settlement, created in the time of Ashurnasirpal II, was continued with only minor variations throughout the Neo-Assyrian period. Fortresses that most likely were stormed from many sides are frequently attacked from only one or two sides (Pls. Ia, c, d, IIIa, c, d, IVc, VIIa, e, VIIIb). Related actions are represented in front of or below the fortress, like the arrangement of figures in rows within the register field. When the fortress stands above a mound or siege-mound, this feature serves as a backdrop for the lower "register". Platforms constructed to support soldiers and siege-machines are placed diagonally across the siege-mound or adjacent to it (Pls. IIIa, IVa, b). The principle of isocephaly usually determines the relation of figures to buildings: the attacking Assyrians are the same height, or nearly so, as the one- or multi-storied fortresses they storm. Smaller Assyrian soldiers appear in front of the fortress or siege-mound, attacking the walls or doors of the fortification (Pls. IIIb, IVb, Vb) or fighting enemies in hand-to-hand combat (Pl. IIa). Defenders in the fortresses are often rendered as partial figures, while the victorious Assyrians in the conquered cities are shown in their entirety.³¹

The fortress attacked from one or both sides also compressed a sequence of events into one scene, using the convention of "simultaneous succession". Its customary expression is the siege, in which a city is shown under attack, defenders fighting from its towers, while Assyrian soldiers carry away booty from the flaming city (Pls. Va, VIIa). R. Naumann has observed that the presence or absence of crenellations on the walls of a city refers to the progress of the siege: a lack of battlements, or walls in flames, indicates that the city is under attack or has been taken and destroyed.³² He has thus hinted at the function of this arrangement as a narrative convention. Two representations from the Balawat Gates depict half of a fortified city, crenellations intact, defended from within by archers while Assyrian soldiers attack from one side (Pls. Ic, VIIa). The other half of the city is in flames, the battlements are no longer visible, and victorious soldiers march away from the other side of the conquered city. The battlements could represent the defence of a city, behind which its archers shoot, their absence thus symbolic of the city's subsequent capture. Alternatively, this could be a realistic portrayal of an actual change: perhaps the Assyrians took away the portable crenellations, if in stone, as good

building material. In any case, the presence or absence of crenellations serves as a narrative device, helping the viewer to read the sequence of events from one end of the city to the other. The dominating movement in the narration is the progress of the Assyrian war-machine.

The Degree of Individuality in the Representations of Urartian, Median and Elamite Architecture

The Urartian fortresses depicted on the Balawat Gates are all placed on a scale-patterned mound, the conventional rendering of mountainous terrain (Pl. I). The city in Gilzanu (Pl. Ie) is further situated on or near a body of water. Arsashku (Pl. Id) and the Gilzanu fortress (Pl. Ie) are represented with a second fortification wall, also low and wide, shown above the wall that stands directly on the mound. The superposed wall should probably be interpreted as a second line of fortifications behind the wall on the scale-patterned mound. This second wall probably also rose above the first, or thus appeared when seen from below. It seems unlikely that the complex consisted of a single two-tiered fortification wall.

Another feature common to the Urartian fortresses is the series of towers or buttresses spaced along the curtain walls at fairly regular intervals, in all but one (Pl. Ia) projecting just above the curtain walls. The towers in all of the cities are topped by narrow bands with rounded edges, the same width as the part attached to the main walls. Those of the Gilzanu fortress project above the curtain wall only on the level directly above the mound; the buttresses in the second wall are the same height as the wall they articulate. This fortress is further distinctive in that the towers are crowned by half-merlons, the curtain walls by triangular battlements. The walls of the other cities are in flames and, in accordance with the convention discussed above, do not show any crenellations. The Urartian fortresses have at least one arched gateway whose doors open in the centre, and at least one additional arched entrance at either end.

Although some of these architectural features recur in representations of other fortresses on the Balawat Gates, they are not found in the same combination observed for Urartu. The Phoenician city of Khazazu in Pl. VIIa stands on a plain mound, thus not in mountainous country. Its towers project above the curtain walls and are wider at the top than in the lower part, in contrast to Urartian towers. The city of Tyre is situated on a scale-patterned mound comprising an island, at some distance from the mainland where tribute is unloaded from boats (Pl. VIc). Its fortifications, like those of Khazazu, are built with towers that project noticeably above the curtain walls and are wider at the top where triangular crenellations stand.

Two representations of North Syrian cities from Band IV of the Balawat Gates (Pl. VIId, e) closely resemble one another and differ from both Urartian and Phoenician fortifications. The absence of any topographical convention on the ground line suggests that the scene takes place in flat country; in any case, it differs from the scale-patterned mounds underneath Urartian cities and the plain mound below the Phoenician city of Khazazu. As in the Phoenician fortresses, the curtain walls of the North Syrian cities are broken up by towers whose tops project above the walls and are wider than the parts attached to the curtain walls. The walls of these cities, however, unlike those of either Urartu or Phoenicia, have fewer towers spaced along them. The second row of walls in both examples consists of a wall with a central arched gateway and a tower at either end.

Another type of fortress architecture appears in two cities from Band V (Pl. VIIb, c). While both registers of this band also depict the campaign in Northern Syria, these fortresses stand on low mounds, above the wavy lines ending in spirals that represent a river or body of water, thus suggesting a different local terrain. These fortress walls resemble the second row of walls in the North Syrian cities just described (Pl. VIId, e), with a central arched gateway flanked by towers in a wall whose only other towers are at either end. The tops of the towers in Pl. VIIb, c, however, project much further above the curtain walls. The gate in Pl. VIIb is also distinguished by a double line around its arch, extending horizontally to the flanking towers.

Still another arrangement of fortress architecture in its topographical setting appears in two scenes from Shalmaneser's campaign in Northeast Mesopotamia (Pl. VIII). The city of Uburi, in Pl. VIIb, is located on a series of scale-patterned mounds of varying size. It appears to occupy both registers of this band, but whether this represents multiple rows of walls and towers, or an unusually

extensive settlement, is unclear. The towers vary in height, spaced quite irregularly along the curtain walls. The towers flanking the gates rise above the curtain walls, while those away from the gates are usually the same height as the walls. Each stretch of curtain wall and each tower is surmounted by triangular crenellations. The city in Pl. VIIa is also located in Northeast Mesopotamia, but the terrain here is apparently less mountainous. At either end of this fortress is an arched gate, flanked by towers which project above the curtain walls. As in the city of Ubur (Pl. VIIb), triangular crenellations crown both towers and walls. The proportions of these walls and towers are tall, in contrast to the relatively low, wide fortifications of Urartian, Phoenician, and two of the North Syrian cities (Pl. VIId, e).³³

The representations of Western Iranian locations from the palace of Sargon II exhibit a different arrangement of fortress architecture. The Median cities of the Khorsabad reliefs, as reproduced in Flandin's drawings, are usually situated on a scale-patterned mound (Pls. IIb, III, IV); five are located on or near a river (Pls. IIb, IIIa, IV). Common to this group is a fortification wall with a number of towers—usually seven, eight or nine—spaced along the curtain walls at fairly regular intervals. Six contain a second row of walls and towers centred above the first. Another standard feature is the vertical row of rectangular openings in the parts of the towers attached to the curtain walls. The parts of the towers that project above the curtain walls are consistently wider than the part attached to the walls and contain two rectangular openings. The walls and towers in all the representations are surmounted by triangular crenellations. There is at least one arched entrance with doors opening in the centre, located in the lowest level of fortified walls in most of the representations, and in the second row of walls and towers in four of them (Pls. IIb, IIIa, b, IVc). The exception is Kisheslu (Pl. IVa), where the only structure that might represent an entrance is the tower-flanked rectangular gate atop a small scale-patterned mound between the ramps built to support Assyrian siege-machines. Perhaps this siege-mound conceals the real entrance.³⁴

The Median cities of Sargon's reliefs vary in other details of architecture or topographical setting, suggesting an attempt to distinguish particular locations within this geographical region. The city of Tikrakka (Pl. IIId) boasts an Assyrian royal image, shown to one side of the fortress wall.³⁵ Kindau (Pl. IIc), Harhar (Pl. IVc) and Kisheslu (Pl. IVa) have an outer fortification wall, topped by crenellations, in front of the walls and towers comprising the main defence. Kindau and Harhar also contain an "inner citadel" composed of one or more structures. Kisheshim (Pl. IIb) features a third row of walls and towers centred above the first two, and a "lower town" of individual gate-like buildings outside the scale-patterned mound.³⁶ To the right of the Mannean city of Pazashi/Panzish is a second scale-patterned mound with trees on its top and side (Pl. IVb). In this fortress the towers contain a single rectangular opening in the part attached to the curtain walls, and a second arched entrance is located to one side of the central gate.

Median fortress architecture as represented on the Khorsabad reliefs differs from the Urartian, Phoenician, North Syrian and Northeast Mesopotamian locations depicted on the Balawat Gates. None of the examples described previously contains more than two rows of walls and towers, nor the rectangular openings in the towers that occur regularly in Median fortifications. Comparison with contemporary representations also illustrates the distinctive traits of the Median group. Similar, but not identical, fortifications appear among the reliefs from Room V of Sargon's palace, where Phoenician, Syrian and Palestinian locations captured during the campaign of 720 B.C. were apparently depicted.³⁷ Common to this group is a single row of walls and towers above a tall, scale-patterned mound. As in the Median fortresses, the towers of the western cities rise above the curtain walls and contain two rectangular openings in their upper parts. The Room V cities vary, however, in the number and location of entrances and of openings in the towers and walls, whereas the Median fortresses exhibited a standard arrangement.³⁸ The Western Iranian fortresses also contrast with the representation of Palestinian Lachish, depicted on a relief of Sennacherib (Pl. VIb). The upper parts of the Lachish towers contain four rectangular openings, while two are standard in Median fortresses. In addition, the Lachish towers support a kind of balcony in which the defenders stand, an arrangement not found among the Median cities.

Characteristic Median features also occur on the relief of Tiglath-pileser III identified by R. D. Barnett as a Median location by a conjectural reading of the damaged inscription (Pl. IIa). There are no

rectangular openings in the main parts of the towers, but the typical pair does occur in the tower tops, which are wider than the parts attached to the curtain walls and project above the walls. Like Kindau (Pl. IIIc) and Harhar (Pl. IVc), the city in Pl. IIa has an outer wall, unbroken by towers or buttresses, which rests directly on the scale-patterned mound. The upper edge of this wall, as in the Khorsabad examples, is marked by double lines and a row of triangular crenellations. A conclusive identification of this fortress as Median depends on further comparison with Palestinian and other locations in the reliefs of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II.

The Elamite scenes illustrated in Ashurbanipal's reliefs at Nineveh constitute the third group of fortresses examined here. These cities usually stand on a plain, rather than a scale-patterned mound (Pls. V, VIa). Three are located near a river and a forest; the fourth, on a tree-covered mound. The fortifications of Hamanu (Pl. V) and another Elamite location consist of two rows of walls with towers at regular intervals, one centred above the other. The towers in both rows project above the curtain walls, and towers and walls are topped by crenellations. In two examples, a rectangular entrance with a stepped-in lintel appears in the centre of the first row of walls (Pl. V). The fortress at Madaktu (Pl. VIa) is rendered in schematic fashion, the city scene serving here to locate the campaign rather than as the site of a decisive battle. Only one row of walls and towers appears here, but as in other Elamite fortresses the towers rise above the curtain walls.

Although two of the Elamite cities are identified by cuneiform labels as Hamanu, they differ in certain topographical and architectural details (Pl. V). Since their common features have already been noted, however, the variations may reflect instead the different moments of the siege chosen for illustration. In the scene from Room F of the North Palace, Hamanu stands on a low mound and is still under attack, preserving additional architectural details (Pl. Vb). Here the second row of walls and towers contains a series of openings or balconies from which the inhabitants return fire.³⁹ A third level of walls, unarticulated by towers, is centred above the second row. The towers and walls, which serve also as ground lines for the registers of figures in action, are crowned by stepped battlements. In contrast, Hamanu as portrayed above Room S stands on a high mound covered by trees (Pl. Va). The Assyrian soldiers breaking the walls of the fortress into bricks or blocks and wooden beams have already dismantled such features as crenellations, tower tops, and temporary siege constructions. This version records a different moment, viz. the successful outcome of the battle. The tall mound serves as a lower register, permitting the artist to depict a sequence of events in one scene, and to portray the departing Assyrian soldiers in their entirety. The distinctive topographical feature is not the height of the mound, but rather the absence of the scale-pattern; the local terrain is thus relatively flat. Despite these variations, the common elements of Hamanu are clearly represented in both examples.⁴⁰

Elamite fortresses differ from those of other regions discussed above by their topographical setting and the arrangement and form of walls, towers and entrances. Like the Median fortifications portrayed at Khorsabad, they consist of two rows of crenellated walls and towers, but lack the scale-patterned mound and the rectangular openings in the towers that helped to define the former group. In addition, the stepped-in lintel seems to occur only in Elamite architecture.⁴¹ Contemporary representations also suggest that Ashurbanipal's sculptors attempted to record characteristic features of foreign lands and settlements as well as individual details of particular locations. The Egyptian fortresses illustrated in Room M of the North Palace are placed above a river that constitutes a separate register, without the conventional mound. They are recognizable by their tapering towers that rise above the curtain walls. A low wall articulated by towers of similar tapered form surrounds one of the fortresses, in a kind of plan projection.⁴²

Conclusions

The task is now to assess the documentary value of the architectural representations for the original appearance of the fortresses. The role of spatial and narrative conventions in this connection has already been discussed. A standard siege formula was created early in the Neo-Assyrian period and continued until the seventh century without substantial alteration. The register scheme and superposition dominated the Assyrian compositions, permitting the artist to narrate a series of events in a single picture, but severely limiting the repertory of spatial relationships. Occasionally the

architectural and landscape elements themselves serve in the composition, forming ground lines or registers for the figures in action. As in the example of Hamanu discussed above, the narrative purpose of the scene could also determine the individual features depicted. Consequently, the representations furnish little reliable evidence for realistic topographical features or the proportions or relationships of walls and towers.

Further limits of likeness may result from considerations of workmanship and style. Since the master plan of decoration would have been carried out by different artists, opportunities for variations in style or detail perhaps occurred at several stages in the relief carving. J. E. Reade has suggested that drawings made on location were the principal source for the images depicted on the palace walls.⁴³ Assuming the existence of such sketches, however, does not ensure that specific details of the scenes observed at first hand were always faithfully reproduced in the final, sculpted version. Such patterns of workmanship may well have varied during different reigns. Moreover, the careful illustration of the campaigns no doubt developed during the Neo-Assyrian period from the highly standardized beginnings under Ashurnasirpal II. The reliefs of Sargon II and Ashurbanipal, for example, seem especially attentive in representing particular locations.⁴⁴

Finally, the illustrations preserved only via the nineteenth-century drawings by Flandin and others possibly contain errors of simplification or misunderstanding of the original reliefs. The representations of architecture in Sargon's reliefs and some of Ashurbanipal's sculptures are thereby further removed from any record made by Assyrian artists in the field.

Nevertheless, the degree of individuality among the representations discussed above suggests that Assyrian artists consistently attempted to depict characteristic arrangements of fortress architecture and its setting, beginning at least as early as the reign of Shalmaneser III. The architectural representations examined above are differentiated in such specific elements as topographical setting, the arrangement of fortress walls, the number and organization of towers, the location and form of entrances, and the presence and shape of crenellations. These variations occur in the small engraved scenes on the Balawat Gates, as well as in the larger illustrations of the carved stone orthostats. Considerations of workmanship and style do not appear to have influenced significantly the rendering of enemy fortresses via a consistent combination of architectural and topographical elements. The function of the reliefs supports this conclusion, since the presence of such distinctive features—fortresses as well as national dress and weaponry—was essential to the narration.

According to the evidence portrayed on the reliefs, there were regional differences in the military architecture of the areas in which the Assyrians conducted their campaigns. The next step in investigating the documentary value of the relief scenes should be to assess the extent to which these variations correspond to the excavated evidence for fortress architecture and its topographical setting. Comparison of the representations with contemporary archaeological remains in the regions under Assyrian control should help to determine further the degree of realism which the sculptures contain.

ABBREVIATIONS

Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*:—R. D. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668–627 B.C.)* (London, 1976).

Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*:—R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs and Their Influence on the Sculptures of Babylonia and Persia* (London, 1960).

Barnett and Falkner:—R. D. Barnett and M. Falkner, *The Sculptures of Assurnasirpali (883–859 B.C.), Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.), Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.) from the Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud* (London, 1962).

Botta and Flandin:—P. E. Botta and E. Flandin, *Monument de Ninive*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1849–50).

King:—L. W. King, *Bronze Reliefs from the Gates of Shalmaneser, King of Assyria B.C. 860–825*. (London, 1915).

Paterson:—A. Paterson, *Assyrian Sculpture: Palace of Sinacherib*. (The Hague 1915).

University, 1975). Recent discussions have been incorporated where appropriate. My thanks to Crawford H. Greenewalt, Jr., Carl Nylander, Edith Porada and David Stronach for their many valuable comments on this subject.

Photographs of the reliefs are reproduced with the kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

² T. A. Madhloum, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* (London, 1970), with further references.

³ Examples include Nineveh: J. E. Reade, "More Drawings of Ashurbanipal Sculptures", *Iraq* XXVI (1964), p. 5; Musasir: R. Naumann, "Bemerkungen zu urartäischen Tempeln", *Ist. Mitt.* 18 (1968), with further references; the "ziggurat relief": Ernst Heinrich, rev. of R. Ghirshman, *Tchoga Zanbil I*, *AfO* 23 (1970), pp. 106–7, with bibliography.

⁴ R. Naumann, *Architektur Kleinasiens von ihren Anfängen bis zum Ende der hethitischen Zeit* (Tübingen, 1971), pp. 316–19. Isolated scenes of fortresses have been thought to depict individual locations: for example, Pauline Albenda, "A Syro-Palestinian (?) City on a Ninth Century B.C. Assyrian Relief", *BASOR* 206 (1972), pp. 42–8; Helmut Brunner, "Ein assyrisches Relief mit einer

¹ This article is excerpted from my undergraduate honours thesis (Bryn Mawr College, 1973), revised as an M.A. thesis (Columbia

- ägyptischen Festung", *AFO* 16 (1952–3), pp. 252–62. A. W. Lawrence, *Greek Aims in Fortification* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 15–27, discusses Assyrian representations as sources for contemporary military architecture, without attempting a detailed analysis by geographical region.
- ⁵ H. W. Saggs, "Assyrian Warfare in the Sargonid Period", *Iraq* XXV (1963), p. 148. Scribes and sculptors also appear on the reliefs: Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pls. 36, 170; Botta and Flandin II, pl. 141 (Musasir).
- ⁶ D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago, 1926) I, p. 209; II, pp. 84, 298, 308. Most recently, Yutaka Ikeda, "Royal Cities and Fortified Cities", *Iraq* XLI (1979), pp. 75–87.
- ⁷ *L.A.R.*, II, pp. 90–1.
- ⁸ J. E. Reade, "Sargon's Campaigns of 720, 716, and 715 B.C.: Evidence from the Sculptures", *JNES* 35 (1976), pp. 95–104, with further references, following the re-editing of the captions by M. El-Amin.
- ⁹ J. E. Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Sculpture", *Bagh. Mitt.* 10 (1979), pp. 96–106.
- ¹⁰ Markus Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrischer neuassyrischer Darstellungen*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, Bd. 26 (1975), pp. 1–21, with bibliography.
- ¹¹ Since most of the representations of fortresses in the Zagros region are identified as Median locations, I have grouped them here as "Median". Louis D. Levine, "Geographical Studies in the Neo-Assyrian Zagros – II", *Iran* XII (1974), pp. 112–19, discusses the location of Mannea, Harhar and Media, citing pertinent literature.
- ¹² King, pp. 10–14.
- ¹³ Levine, *Iran* XII, p. 120, notes that a precise location for Gilzanu calls for additional information on Urartian geography.
- ¹⁴ Barnett and Falkner, pp. xiv–xv; cf. J. E. Reade, "The Palace of Tiglath-pileser III", *Iraq* XXX (1968), pp. 70–3, on the reconstruction of certain sequences of slabs and the arrangement of the relief inscriptions.
- ¹⁵ Barnett and Falkner, pp. xix, 14.
- ¹⁶ J. E. Reade, *JNES* 35, pp. 95–104, with additional references.
- ¹⁷ J. E. Reade, *Iraq* XXVI, pp. 3–12, and *Bagh. Mitt.* 10, pp. 96–106.
- ¹⁸ Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, p. 20, on the arrangement of reliefs within the different rooms. Other reliefs in the "Upper Chambers" depicted Elamite locations, such as the city of Din-Sharri (Barnett, p. 59); a drawing by W. Boucher preserves a large part of the scene, but not the city itself (Barnett, pl. LXVII). Barnett has suggested an Elamite location for an unidentified city (p. 46, pl. XXXV), as noted above, p. 110 with n. 41.
- ¹⁹ E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London, 1962), p. 243, discussing the rendering of space in two-dimensional art.
- ²⁰ J. E. Reade, *Bagh. Mitt.* 10, pp. 52–110. Valuable discussions are also found in H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement* (London, 1951), pp. 170–81; and Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia*, transl. by Judith Filson (London and New York, 1969), pp. 123–57, with further references.
- ²¹ Further examples include reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II (Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pl. 10) and Tiglath-pileser III (Barnett and Falkner, pl. LXX).
- ²² Also Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pl. XXIII. Earlier examples occur in reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II (Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pl. 21) and Tiglath-pileser III (Barnett and Falkner, pl. IV; also *infra*, Pl. IIa).
- ²³ Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pls. 161–62; King, pl. LXIII. In King, pl. I, the sea of Nairi fills the upper register.
- ²⁴ King, pl. LIX, from Band X.
- ²⁵ Reade, *Bagh. Mitt.* 10, p. 94, on the composition of these reliefs and their use of landscape features.
- ²⁶ Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pls. XXIII, XXXVI, LXI.
- ²⁷ This seems to be the sculptor's intent, for example, in reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II (Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pl. 11, figure in upper left of scene) and Ashurbanipal (Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pl. VI, figures atop mound).
- ²⁸ Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pls. 141, 145, 150, 156–7.
- ²⁹ Also the Egyptian city in Room M (Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pl. XXXVI, upper register). A kind of plan seems to be used in a relief of Tiglath-pileser III, although it is difficult to interpret the series of mounds enclosing the fortification: Barnett and Falkner, pl. XLVI and p. 14.
- ³⁰ This has also been observed by R. Naumann, *Architektur Kleinasien* (Tübingen, 1971), p. 319, and Edith Porada, "Battlements in the Military Architecture and in the Symbolism of the Ancient Near East", in D. Fraser, H. Hibbard and M. J. Lewine, eds., *Essays in the History of Architecture Presented to Rudolf Wittkower* (London, 1967), p. 4.
- ³¹ The scale of Assyrians to enemy fortresses is probably also determined by "value perspective", depicting the army in a clearly superior position: the outcome of the siege is assured.
- ³² Naumann, *Architektur Kleinasien*, pp. 316–7.
- ³³ Further examples of distinctive topography and fortress architecture occur in Band IX (King, pls. XLIX, L, LIII: campaign in Syria); Band XI (King, pls. LXIII, LXV: campaign in Southern Babylonia); Band XIII (King, pls. LXXIII, LXXV, LXXVII: campaign in Syria).
- ³⁴ I owe this suggestion to Machteld J. Mellink, citing the possible example of Küçük Hüyük, excavated at Gordion in Central Turkey. This explanation may apply as well to the representation of Lachish (Pl. VIb).
- ³⁵ Reade, *JNES* 35, p. 103, following M. El-Amin, notes that the presence of the sculpture allows an identification with Tikrakka/Shikrakki, where Tiglath-pileser III reports having erected a stele.
- ³⁶ These structures are in all respects like those depicted next to the pilastered facade (?) at Harhar, above the walls and towers. Perhaps they represent public buildings of some kind. Similar structures appear in Ashurbanipal's portrayal of Elamite Madaktu (Pl. Va).
- ³⁷ Botta and Flandin II, pls. 86, 89–90, 93, 96–97. Reade, *op. cit.* pp. 99–102, with further references, discusses the locations and their arrangement in Room V.
- ³⁸ This could reflect regional variations in fortress style or, as with the Median locations, an attempt to distinguish the individual cities captured during the campaign.
- ³⁹ A similar arrangement appears in the unnamed Elamite city, together with a balcony-like construction extending from the upper row of walls and towers (Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pl. LXI).
- ⁴⁰ J. E. Reade, "Elam and Elamites in Assyrian Sculpture", *AMI* 9 (1976), pp. 102–3, for a different explanation of the two versions.
- ⁴¹ Also noted by Reade, *op. cit.*, p. 103, and E. Porada, *loc. cit.*, p. 6; both with further references. Barnett suggests that a fortress without cuneiform label in one of Ashurbanipal's reliefs should be Elamite—perhaps Hamanu itself—because of its stepped-in lintel (*Ashurbanipal*, pl. XXV and p. 46).
- ⁴² Barnett, *Ashurbanipal*, pl. XXXVI.
- ⁴³ Reade, *JNES* 35, pp. 95–6.
- ⁴⁴ A like interest in depicting individual locations seems evident as well in the reliefs of Sennacherib, as in the siege of Lachish. Insufficient examples from his reign are preserved, however, for an assessment of the representations as a group.